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# VEM PRA RUA/COME TO THE STREETS: THE POWER OF PROTEST IN BRAZIL

by

JESSICA LEIGH GLASS

Under the Direction of Cassandra White

## ABSTRACT

This study offers an ethnographic account of the Brazilian protest movement that erupted in June of 2013. I conducted fieldwork in Rio during this time, including unstructured interviews, participant observation, unobtrusive observation, and collection of narratives to gain an understanding of what people living in Rio believe about these protests and social movements in general. The initial motivation for the protests was an increase in public transportation fare, but the movement quickly evolved into a fight for citizenship rights. With the upcoming mega-events in Rio (World Cup and Olympic Games), the city has spent billions of dollars on construction that many people think is unnecessary and ultimately useless. Brazil is a country rife with socioeconomic inequality, and many citizens lack access to having their basic needs met. Protesters in Rio argue that this money could be better spent on providing health care, education, and other fundamental necessities to the city's population.

INDEX WORDS: Protests, Social movements, Structural inequality, Structural violence, Citizenship rights, Collective action, Public places and politics



VEM PRA RUA/COME TO THE STREETS: THE POWER OF PROTEST IN BRAZIL

by

JESSICA LEIGH GLASS

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

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2014

VEM PRA RUA/COME TO THE STREET: THE POWER OF PROTEST IN BRAZIL

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December 2014

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this thesis to all the Cariocas who work hard to build their city, and to anyone struggling to live a successful life in Rio. I also dedicate this thesis to anyone who understands what it means to truly love Rio de Janeiro. Just like the city itself, this love is complicated and full of contradictions.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES .....</b>	<b>ix</b>
<b>1 INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2 METHODS .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2.1 Ethnography .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2.2 Participant Observation .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2.3 Interviews/Narratives.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>3.1 Habitus and Structural Inequalities/Violence .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>3.2 Making Public Space Political: Aesthetics of Protest .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>3.3 Protest Culture .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>3.4 Social Movement Theory .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>4 STRUCTURAL INEQUALITY IN BRAZIL .....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>4.1 Structural Inequality, Sanitation, and Wellbeing .....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>4.2 Inequality in Healthcare .....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>4.3 Inequality in Education .....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>4.4 Additional Motives behind the Current Protest Movement.....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>5 RESEARCH: IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT CENTS.....</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>5.1 "A single spark can start a prairie fire".....</b>	<b>60</b>

<b>5.2</b>	<b>Who will make the parties? .....</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>5.4</b>	<b>It's oppression, not pacification .....</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>5.5</b>	<b>We work hard to build the city: we are Rio de Janeiro.....</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>DISCUSSION.....</b>	<b>72</b>
	<b>CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>79</b>
	<b>REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>82</b>



## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 Crying for rights, credit Paulo Ito.....	12
Figure 2 Food not football, credit Paulo Ito.....	13
Figure 3 Misplaced priorities, credit Paulo Ito .....	14
Figure 4 Rocinha 1, credit Jessica Glass.....	26
Figure 5 Rocinha 2, credit Jessica Glass.....	27
Figure 6 Rocinha 3, credit Jessica Glass.....	28
Figure 7 Rocinha 4, credit Jessica Glass.....	40
Figure 8 Parque de Catacumba 1, credit Jessica Glass .....	43
Figure 9 Parque de Catacumba 2, credit Jessica Glass .....	44
Figure 10 Vila Autódromo 1, credit Jessica Glass.....	46
Figure 11 Vila Autódromo 2, credit Jessica Glass.....	47
Figure 12 Vila Autódromo 3, credit Jessica Glass.....	48
Figure 13 Vila Autódromo 4, credit Jessica Glass.....	49
Figure 14 Vila Autódromo 5, credit Jessica Glass.....	50
Figure 15 Vila Autódromo 6, credit Jessica Glass.....	51
Figure 16 Vila Autódromo 7, credit Jessica Glass.....	52
Figure 17 Vila Autódromo 8, credit Jessica Glass.....	53
Figure 18 Vila Autódromo 9, credit Jessica Glass.....	54
Figure 19 Vila Autódromo Twilight, credit Jessica Glass .....	55
Figure 20 Vila Autódromo Twighlight 2, credit Jessica Glass .....	56
Figure 21 Signs of the future, credit Jessica Glass .....	57
Figure 22 Rio's future?, credit Jessica Glass .....	58

Figure 23 Carlos, credit Jessica Glass.....	59
Figure 24 Amarildo 1, credit Facebook community: Onde está Amarildo?.....	75
Figure 25 Amarildo 2, credit Facebook community: Onde está Amarildo?.....	76
Figure 26 Amarildo 3, credit Facebook community: Onde está Amarildo?.....	77
Figure 27 Amarildo 4, credit Facebook community: Onde está Amarildo?.....	78

## 1 INTRODUCTION

“For the right to the city” “The government is the cancer of Brazil” “Change our government, change our future”. These were some of the first sentiments I witnessed as displays of protest in June of 2013. Just prior to my arrival in Rio, the government announced there was going to be an increase in public transit fare. They assured the people of Brazil that there was no reason for alarm, that the increase “*É apenas 20 centavos* (is just 20 cents).” The people of Brazil disagreed. I arrived in Rio on June 14th, 2013, and the events that unfolded in the following days are what solidified my research topic; a burgeoning protest movement appeared. Streets all over the country became charged with people, excited to tell stories of why they, personally, were inspired into action. For this thesis research project, I embarked on a study abroad field school, interested in documenting how residents of Rio de Janeiro felt about changes associated with the 2014 World Cup and 2016 Olympics. Within the first few days of my trip, it became clear quickly that the massive protest movement was a reflection of how people felt about these changes, and I took the opportunity to further investigate what triggered them.

One of the things that initially drew me to Brazil was its intense structural inequality; I have always advocated for individuals and groups who are disadvantaged because of such violence. The research questions that emerged were: did structural inequality feed into the changes occurring? If so, what do people living in Rio think about this? What do individuals think about the burgeoning protest movement? Do they believe it will elicit change in their country? Moreover, what are all of the reasons behind the protests? In order to address these questions, I conducted semi-structured, opportunistic interviews in working class/favela neighborhoods as well as in middle and upper class homes in the Zona Sul (South Zone) of the city. I also observed and participated in daily life there as part of my fieldwork. I returned to Rio

in April, 2014 to attend a conference titled “Mega-Events and the City” to gain a deeper understanding of the protest movement and changes occurring in the city, and conducted more fieldwork while I was there. Most of my participants were born and raised in Rio and identify themselves within that context, as “Cariocas”, and offered meaningful narratives of their experiences as such. This second trip truly bolstered my initial research, which deepened my understanding of the protests, protesters, Cariocas, and the city itself. The protests that erupted during the summer of 2013 my first week in Rio changed the direction of my research, and the experience of doing this fieldwork changed my life.

A few days after I arrived in Rio, I, along with a couple other students, learned through social media that a peaceful protest was slated to take place in downtown that day at 4 PM. The fact that many protesters were being met with violence by the police had gained international attention, and the Study Abroad Office had contacted our director, telling her to forbid us to go to any protests, which she did. Despite this fact, by this time, we understood that something of true cultural significance was taking place, and decided we could not miss it. We made our way to the downtown area, which is predominantly commercial. Most of the businesses had closed early in anticipation of the protest, which was a frequent occurrence in Rio during the summer of 2013. Since no one was doing business, it was a ghost town; it seemed as if we were all alone. Unacquainted with the neighborhood, we wandered through the industrial, desolate, and strangely muted downtown area. We were excitedly watching the time, anticipating people to arrive in protest. At ten till four, with still no others in sight, we wondered if we were in the wrong place, if we had confused the directions, or if perhaps the protest had been canceled. At precisely four o’clock, however, every street in sight became saturated by people. Due to the number of bodies swaddled in Brazilian flags, it was as though a green sea was flooding

downtown Rio. The city was instantaneously permeated with sound; many people chanted in unison, others sang loudly, and everyone was charged with intense emotion. It was quite warm to begin with that day, and the temperature in the air increased during these moments of protest. Thick with bodies, the already unfamiliar neighborhood became unrecognizable as people swarmed in protest. I found myself lost in the noisy, hot sea that bathed downtown Rio on this day, but somehow felt protected by the energy it provided.

The lesson that followed this experience was that, as an anthropologist, I had to give up control. You cannot necessarily plan what questions to ask people, how they might respond, or what their behavior may be. Brazil had not seen evidence of protests in two decades when I arrived in June 2013. I had spent months trying to figure out every possible angle for my research, but was quickly taught that sometimes your research finds you. The protest movement that unfolded before me derailed some of our plans, but provided me feasible opportunities for research; injustices fueled the protests, and everyone I encountered was inspired to discuss them with me. The summer of 2013 brought the biggest manifestations that Brazil had seen in twenty years, and with it, a substantive foundation for my fieldwork.

## **2 METHODS**

### **2.1 Ethnography**

Historically, ethnography has been thought of as research that is conducted within a particular group of people who live in the same place, therefore sharing behaviors and basic beliefs. More recently, social science has expanded ethnographic studies to include essentially any group, through whichever means they identify themselves (Kottak 2013: 36-37). Because of this, the concept of ethnography has expanded to include interest groups, occupations, and social

activities. I knew I would be conducting ethnographic field work in Brazil, but I did not have any idea what was in store for me. Physically being there during the summer of 2013 and pursuing follow-up research since allows me to provide an ethnographic account of a protest culture in Rio that began before my eyes, one that some believe continues to loom today.

As an undergraduate cultural anthropology student, I took an ethnographic methods course as a recommended elective. Though the professor was amongst the most challenging in the department, I found the work she assigned came naturally to me, and I found it immensely enjoyable. It was during this time I realized that ethnography is what I do; naturally curious about people, I constantly observe and take mental notes of my surroundings, the way people behave, what they say, and how they appear. While participating in a study abroad in Pakistan, my host mother said to me, “I love to watch you watch in my country. It is like you are drinking with your eyes.” That is how I do ethnography; it is truly to feed my curiosity. For as long as I can remember, even as a young child, I have always simultaneously noticed details about people and posited their perspectives. I genuinely strive to understand what drives people’s actions, especially when their realities are dissimilar to my own. The time I have spent doing research in and about Rio over the past 11 months has been an incredible feast for the ethnographer in me. I approached my research holistically; I spent my time there soaking up the sights, sounds, and sentiments that the city and its denizens had to offer. I have enjoyed every opportunity possible to understand how and why Rio’s current culture has been constructed, and I spoke to countless Cariocas about their perspectives and ideas of what is taking place in their city.

## **2.2 Participant Observation**

As the protests broke out in June of 2013, it was made clear to us that all GSU students were to stay far from any danger. Foreign media was showing dramatic violence that was taking

place, mostly of police brutality against protesters, so the university insisted that students not participate in any protests. Though perhaps not conveyed by the media, I witnessed a strong sentiment by many Brazilians to commit to peaceful protests. As a group, our field school joined peaceful protesters walking along the beach in Arpoador, headed for the governor's house in Leblon. People as far as the eye could see waved Brazilian flags while humming songs together, many of them holding hands. While we were told not to attend any protests, that was a tall order to follow in Rio during the summer of 2013. During this time, protests were capricious; at first, to an outsider like myself, they seemed to just happen, and there was no way to anticipate what might occur during or afterward. Some were seemingly endless, others fleeting. The one thing certain about these protests was their relevance. People came together here because of shared ideals or causes, and a greater, collective culture was created through beliefs, songs, aesthetics, rituals, and general behavior. This was the second of four protests I participated in during the summer of 2013, and an extremely powerful thing I witnessed all summer in Brazil. The formulation of a collective group where passions run deep can be inspiring. Differences that usually keep people from identifying with one another – socio-economical, occupational, generational, etc. – become less important during this time, and support for the group and its causes become paramount.

### **2.3 Interviews/Narratives**

For my preliminary research, I was in Rio de Janeiro for four weeks in June and July of 2013. I conducted interviews with 13 people, and visited neighborhoods throughout the city, including the favela neighborhoods of Rocinha and Cantagalo in the Zona Sul (South Zone) of the city. The interviews took place in various locations, depending on the participant. The methods I used for the interviews developed during the course of my research. When speaking to

people, I found it best to explain who I was and why I was in Brazil. With each interview, this was adequate enough information for people to feel comfortable discussing their ideas and opinions with me. The subject of most conversations quickly turned to the demonstrations taking place, which is why it was so imperative that I shifted my research focus to the current culture of protest. I found my informants very eager to speak of their feelings about various injustices in Brazil. In fact, many of them seemed sincerely excited that an American *gringa* was interested in hearing their opinions at all, let alone to the extent which I was. I took fastidious field notes, and looked for common themes and sentiments among my participants.

As I mentioned before, the interviews took place in various locations, depending on the situation. I interviewed three people on Ipanema Beach, four in the neighborhood Lapa, one in an individual's home, three in the individual's place of work, one in a taxi cab, and one at Parque Lage (a public park). Most of these interview participants were from various neighborhoods in Rio, but not all of them told me exactly where they lived. During my research of social exclusion in Brazil, I found evidence suggesting that people are often discriminated against based on the neighborhoods in which they live; poverty is often criminalized (Mario and Woolcock 2008: 12). This may be a reason some participants did not want to disclose where they lived, though they were generally open about everything else. I do know that three of the participants live in the middle/upper-class neighborhood Tijuca, two in the upper-class Botafogo, and three in the favela Rocinha. One of them lives forty-three kilometers from Rio, which she travels to each week day for her job working as a museum door attendant. Another participant lives in São Paulo, and was in Rio on vacation. I interviewed six men and seven women.

Due to the evolving context of my research, some of my earlier plans were set aside. Based on preliminary research done by other ethnographers, I had in mind methods for



interviewing informants using planned questions in the hopes that I could acquire honest information and opinions from them. I went to Brazil trusting that I would be able to use my advisor's connections to find informants who would hopefully lead to a snow-ball method of finding other informants; I assumed if I gained trust with one participant, they could lead me to another (Trotter and Schensul 1998: 705). The reality that I stumbled upon, something I never could have prepared for, and something I believe to be a byproduct of the current protest culture in Brazil, was that people everywhere were excited to talk to me. The original question that I had planned to ask people was: How have changes in Rio affected you with the World Cup and Olympics? *Como é que as mudanças no Rio com a Copa do Mundo e as Olimpíadas lhe afectou?* This could not have been scripted better; this seemingly simple, IRB approved question ended up tying directly into the protests and the protest movement. I got resounding feedback about lack of health care, education, equality, and human rights in general, all things that fueled the protests. I took full advantage of this opportunity, and lent my ears to anyone interested in telling me their story. I conducted very few scheduled interviews, as most of my informants were found in naturally casual situations. This part of my research took place all over Rio de Janeiro. Starting my first Friday night in Lapa, a central neighborhood in Rio known for its nightlife, live music, and Samba, I found myself in the center of a group of young students who were very interested in why I was there. One thing I found note-worthy with these individuals, as well as others, was that despite the language barrier, generally speaking, people seemed to understand immediately my purposes for being there upon my stating "I am an anthropology student". I typically have to explain what this means to people on a regular basis – to friends, family, even other students. In Brazil, this was not the case for me. With most of my informants, that was all I had to say, and they would proceed to tell me what their concerns were, what the government

needed to change, and their role in making it happen. Brazil might lack equality in formal education, but, generally speaking, people I spoke to were knowledgeable about a lot of things, regardless of their varying levels of education. Anthropology was surprisingly one of them.

I returned to Rio in April of 2014 to attend a conference on the impacts mega-events have on cities. It was an international conference, with researchers and activists from all over and from varying disciplines discussing their work. It was an incredible opportunity, as every paper presentation I attended either directly or indirectly tied into my own research about the protests that began in June 2013. I took full advantage of this, making a point of personally discussing people's research and experiences with them whenever possible. An amazing by-product of attending the conference was that I heard in-depth narratives from multiple people directly impacted by events taking place in Rio. Through all of this, I believe I have a much more concrete understanding of the current protest culture and the Carioca experience. I took meticulous notes, and recorded people whenever possible. I transcribed interviews and systematically went through my notes to identify concerns echoed throughout my participants.

I maintained contact with 5 participants I interviewed in 2013 through social media, and was able to conduct follow-up interviews with them. Additionally, through some of these individuals, I was able to meet new participants. Between this and the conference, I had the opportunity to interview/hear from 14 additional individuals, 7 male and 7 female. They are quite varied in terms of socioeconomic status, level of education, occupation, and age. The youngest is 20 and the oldest is 66. I must note here one unforeseen benefit of returning to my field site to conduct more research: familiarity. While I learned an incredible amount during my preliminary research in 2013, looking back I realize that my mind was quite distracted. I was trying to navigate an unfamiliar city, people I did not know, a language I did not understand, and finally, a

city replete with protests and protesters. Again, I learned a tremendous amount during my initial fieldwork, but being familiar with Rio, the things associated with it, and ongoing events in the city allowed my mind to truly and clearly focus on my research during my second trip.

### **3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **3.1 Habitus and Structural Inequalities/Violence**

In *The Logic of Practice*, Bourdieu (1980) explains the concept of habitus, and how culture recreates behaviors. Humans internalize the behaviors and beliefs around which they are raised, essentially embodying them (Bourdieu 1980). In terms of my own research, this is relevant because it is how structural inequalities and violence in Brazil become normalized. It is important to understand how inequalities and violence can continue without forced coercion through this normalization; Gramsci's concept of hegemony explicitly states that leadership depends on the consent of those not included in the ruling class (Gramsci 1971, cited in Bates 1975). Due to the normalization that structural violence creates (and recreates), it can go unnoticed. For those who do not suffer from the effects of it, structural violence can be easy to ignore; some people have told me that they do not believe it even exists. Growing up as I did, surrounded by people blind to their own privilege, I understand that structural violence is not seen by or incorporated into some peoples' realities. It is important for people to understand what "structural violence" is to really see its power, and the word "violence" needs to be deconstructed in order to achieve this. In the most basic of senses, violence occurs when someone's physical and mental well-being is coerced by sources outside the individuals themselves, and they are unable to reach their potential (Galtung 1969: 168). To look at violence critically, the impact of structural violence on people is undeniable. As Bourgois (2009) explains,

“[V]iolence operates along a continuum that spans structural, symbolic, everyday, and intimate dimensions. Structural violence refers to how the political-economic organization of society wreaks havoc on vulnerable categories of people” (Bourgois 2009: 16). People who do not acknowledge the complex reality of structural inequalities and the violence they breed have not had the opportunity to think about this critically; hegemonic forces are in play and work against awareness of it. I believe the protest movement that broke out in Brazil during the summer of 2013 was an example of people looking beyond the hegemonic forces: individuals claimed their agency, and the masses woke up. Perhaps the imprudent spending for the mega-events, coupled with its effects on not just the poor, but the middle class as well, fueled people to question what has been “normal” for them. The protests began due to the increase in transit fare, but quickly evolved into a more general inquisition of Brazilian society; people loudly voiced that what is “normal” in Brazil is no longer acceptable.

### **3.2 Making Public Space Political: Aesthetics of Protest**

For me, one of the most striking elements of the current protest culture in Brazil is the use of aesthetics. I understand that aesthetics have always been used in politically charged fashions (Johnston 2009), but I never experienced how truly powerful they can be until my research in Brazil. Prior to then, I had never felt so intensely provoked by political aesthetics; everywhere I set my gaze in Rio, images displayed by protesters encouraged excitement, anger, and enthusiasm. Regardless of being present at an active protest, their gestures and symbols paint Rio de Janeiro 24/7. The sentiments of the protesters are present for everyone to see and hear. Grounded in political beliefs, the emotions of the protesters have been embodied by tangible displays all over the city that encouraged emotions of my own. As Ebrahim Moosa explains, “Those things and acts that become visible when we do and produce certain actions – jubilation,

conversations, speeches, greetings, protests, banners, deaths, wounds and other expressions – all constitute the means by which thought becomes visible and effective” (Moosa 2011: 171-172). Effectively, through all the things Moosa mentioned, a new culture has been constructed. The wave of protests that began in June 2013 created a popular public discourse of the discontent many Brazilians feel. Though the country had not seen protests in many years, protesting became a part of Brazilian identity, both in Brazil and world –wide. I approached my research knowing that I supported the people of Brazil and the multiple causes that eventually led them into protest. Becoming enveloped in the emotions, aesthetics, and current culture of protest, however, created an unforeseen appetite for further, more targeted research. Many people believe that the protests died out and that nothing was accomplished by them. All over the city, however, there are signs of them. I believe that in the case of current day Rio, protests are not restricted to events where people march in the streets. The dissent and objection that people feel for inequalities, misplaced priorities, and corruption are advertised all over the city via aesthetics.



Figure 1 Crying for rights: included with permission by artist Paulo Ito





Figure 2 Food not football: included with permission by artist Paulo Ito



Figure 3 Misplaced priorities: included with permission by artist Paulo Ito

### 3.3 Protest Culture

Fundamentally, culture consists of traditions, beliefs, and behaviors that people are enculturated with based on their surroundings (Kottak 2013: 4-6). Individuals within a culture are actors who integrate into the large net it casts; past theorists believed that most people attach themselves to the uniform belief systems with which they are presented (Johnston 2009: 4-5). People who engage in social movements deviate from this belief system. Some argue that behaving counter to what is expected achieves something. As Hank Johnston explains, “Performances can be defined as actions that are symbolic because they are interpreted by those also present at the action, the audience. Performances are locations where culture is accomplished” (Johnston 2009: 7). Through protests, by deviating from the norm, new culture is created. Individuals who participated in these protests came to identify themselves within a new



category of people in Brazil – people who went to the streets. The protests that began in June 2013 created a general wave of sentiments that already existed, but were not formally addressed in popular public discourse. They brought to light the myriad problems Brazilians face, and normalized discussions about them, both in Brazil and around the world. This is a product of the new protest culture. The belief that agentive, collective action would bring about social change is an example of the ideational culture created, and by using the streets, a public space, protesters told me they were staking claim on Brazil.

Author Burdick (1998) discusses how important it is for the frame created in a protest culture/movement to resonate within a group or the public. He explains, “When a collective action frame is able to line up...with the existing ideas, beliefs, and concerns, sociologists speak of ‘frame resonance’” (Burdick 1998: 9). This is what appeared to have happened during the summer of 2013 in Rio; from where I was standing, collective thoughts became suddenly aligned, and protesting made sense. These collective thoughts echoed throughout Rio, constructing a prime model for the protest movement. Without all of the proper ingredients, activists may not be able to reach the desired constituents (Burdock 1998). Without strong, collective ideas and the belief that a group can elicit change, there is no real frame to inspire collective action. Perhaps the reality of the World Cup in Brazil is an example of this. The protest culture that began in June 2013 suggested that the country would erupt with protests surrounding the mega-event to speak out against corrupt spending and lack of public services. There were protests, but the movement diminished in comparison to the summer of 2013. Based on what I witnessed and heard while in Rio in 2014, the sentiments of the movement are still intensely present in the city. It could be, however, that the frame failed to resonate the way it did in 2013, being obfuscated by the international soccer event.

### 3.4 Social Movement Theory

To understand the contemporary protest culture in Rio de Janeiro, it is important to examine Brazil's history and socioeconomic backdrop in conjunction with theories of social movements. To break it down to the most basic, fundamental level, whether or not a protest is "successful" in yielding tangible change, the belief that change is a possibility is important (Johnston and Noakes 2005: 1-5). The possibility of changes or ruptures in a corrupt system that seemed unattainable or unimaginable just days before can inspire action. Protests do not merely happen; multiple elements are required in their formation. Sociologists John Noakes and Hank Johnston discuss the essential nature of the framing process in the context of protests and social movements in general. They explain,

...framing functions in much the same way as a frame around a picture: attention gets focused on what is relevant and important and away from extraneous items in the field of view. Even when oppression is intense or when leaders' tactics open up clear opportunities for action, individuals must be convinced that an injustice has occurred, persuaded that collective action is called for, and motivated to act if a social movement is to occur (Noakes and Johnston 2005: 2).

Using this lens, it is important to examine not only the *causes* behind protests, but also how they are interpreted by individual actors, and thus inspire people into collective action (Noakes and Johnston 2005).

To inspire individuals to band together for collective action, theorists Noakes and Johnson suggest that three components are useful: identity, agency, and injustice (Noakes and Johnston 2005: 6). Through identity, individuals can form a group based on similar interests, beliefs, and morals. This enables the formation of a "we" and "them" mentality (Noakes and Johnston 2005: 6-8). Through agency, a group formulates conviction that change is a possibility, therefore inspiring action. Ideas and beliefs surrounding injustice bolster the two previous components;

“they” are at fault for the injustice, and “we”, as victims, must fight against what is unjust (Noakes and Johnston 2005: 6-7). Due to an increasingly globalized world, there are consistently new opportunities for both the “we” and the “them”; we can readily access others who think like us, while simultaneously being exposed to those who may want to exploit us (Nash 2005). These three components within the production of framework – “we”, “them”, and injustice – are undeniably powerful. My fieldwork data clearly demonstrates these theoretical principles. There is a strongly felt “we” amongst my informants, across all socio-economic lines. The “we” category was voiced even louder in 2014, and the “them” has become more criminalized amongst the “we”. Largely, “them” consists of real estate companies, corrupt government and corporate leaders, and the military police (UPP).

John Guidry (2003) discusses the difference between everyday common life experiences and what is seen in the “public sphere”. Though considered a democracy, not everyone in Brazil is represented politically (Guidry 2003: 494). He highlights the difference between the experiences of the “dominant public sphere” (those whose beliefs are publically represented) and the “popular public sphere” (those whose beliefs are not publically represented, and therefore who must fight to be heard). He believes that social movements are crucial in closing the gap between the two (Guidry 2003). Often times, theorists examine movements from the top down – that is, they start with a protest and then break down the reasoning behind it, look at individual actors, and examine their lifestyles. Guidry offers a different theoretical framework: he analyzes the formation and organization of movements, and then looks at their outcomes. As he describes, “This...expands our understanding of that process [deepening democracy] by examining the role of social movements in creating a public politics that addresses popular perceptions of exclusion from the political process” (Guidry 2003: 494).

The Brazilian neighborhoods in which Guidry conducted interviews, Jurunas, Bom Futuro, and Aura, there is a reoccurring theme with individuals about the “struggle to be seen”. His informants identified what they felt was a great divide between themselves, politicians, and the dominant public sphere, so much so that they were invisible to much of society (Guidry 496-498). This divide is characterized by things that make rising into action difficult – lack of education, lack of time, and the general feeling of lack of agency (Guidry 2003: 497). However, when individuals exercise their agency and enter the public sphere, creating a popular public sphere, they can be seen. Guidry explains,

Movement leaders and activists give...grievances specificity by grounding them in concrete issues or events. They tie local problems to propositions about citizenship, mobilization, accountability, and obligation. They put names and faces on the anonymous ‘barons’ of popular discourse, and they picture a dynamic process of interaction between opposing publics and politicians through individual and collective agency (Guidry 2003: 497).

Individuals who are able to succeed in penetrating the public sphere not only get their own voice heard, they can act as a bridge between the popular and dominant spheres; they address localized concerns to public officials which brings attention to the movement and encourages their community to be seen (Guidry 2003: 498).

It is with these individuals who enter the public sphere that social movements can be created. Guidry breaks down movements as having three essential “moments”: clarifying popular discourse, the struggle to be seen, and routine politics. Each moment plays out with varying levels of engagement in the public sphere (Guidry 2003: 500-503). During the first moment, without any involvement in the public sphere, the pronounced sentiments are those of exclusion, detachment from politics, and neglect. In this moment, the public sphere displays equal detachment. At this time, activists begin formulating a popular public sphere by having individual actors coordinate social events or any type of group meeting to discuss politics as

they pertain to the community (Guidry 2003: 500). During the next moment, the widely felt *struggling to be seen*, specific injustices and agents responsible for them are pointed out. There is active discourse between the public and more outspoken members of the marginalized community who have broached this sphere. In this moment, it is time to coordinate meetings of a more elaborate nature outside of the community; it is time for public demonstrations, campaigns aiding multiple causes within the group, and reaching out to other movement organizations, political parties, and larger governmental offices (Guidry 2003: 500-510). In the final moment, the popular discourse has an ongoing connection between any new grievances and the agent/agency that is responsible. The public sphere has a broader concept of the popular experience, with active learning and memory of experiences. The actions taking place during this time are those of network development, adjustment of laws by state or government workers, and support from any public actors or groups (Guidry 2003: 500-503).

A popular theoretical approach to social movements in sociology is Rational Actors Theory. In short, this theory assumes that humans behave how they do based a “rational” balancing of costs versus benefits; we want *more* good and *less* bad (Crossley 2002). In terms of social movements, Rational Actors Theory (RAT from here on out) posits that people are called into action when they believe that more positive things will come of doing so than any repercussions they could potentially encounter (Crossley 2002). I appreciate RAT, and think that it can be useful when discussing people’s behavior. What it omits from the equation, however, is actors’ emotions, which are paramount in the research I did of the current social movement in Brazil. I believe many Brazilian protestors have taken to the streets because of visceral emotions. Another thing I find problematic when applying RAT to my research is in the semantics of it; as a society, we have the tendency to attach positive and negative sentiments to the concepts of

rationality and emotion. The words can be used interchangeably, and their meanings can shift based on how we need them to serve us. As a theoretical framework, RAT is useful and lends credit to protesters based on the positive implication the word “rational” has. In our language, “rational” and “irrational” are binary opposites; the first means reasonable, the second unreasonable. When discussing human behavior for the purposes of my research during the summer of 2013, I find these terms are arbitrary. The rationality behind the protests was the need for change, and the belief that protesting would cause it. My informants who identified themselves as part of the protest movement insisted that this was the case.

It is imperative to focus on emotions and how they cultivate and nourish protest culture.

As James M. Jasper explains,

...emotions accompany all social action, providing both motivation and goals. Social movements are affective bonds and loyalties. Some emotions exist or arise in individuals before they join protest groups; others are formed or reinforced in collective action itself. The latter type can be further divided into shared and reciprocal emotions, the latter being feelings that protestors have toward each other (Jasper 1998: 379).

In the case of my own research, I believe the 2013 protests in Brazil are very much an expression of people's emotions; the nation is full of people whose feelings need to be heard, seen, and felt. Emotions not only explain why people do what they do, they help us formulate intentions and fuel our ambitions (Jasper 1998: 398). They are integral to us, as individuals and as part of a larger group. As people, we are enculturated with emotions just as we are with other belief systems. Because of this, Jasper argues, we should stop linking emotions with “irrationality”. He explains that there needs to be “...an emphasis on how emotions are culturally constructed (and hence linked to cognitive appraisals) rather than being automatic somatic responses (and hence potentially less controllable, or less ‘rational’)” (Jasper 1998: 399). Emotions are constructed, used, and manipulated by the world in which we live. It can be argued that, “without culture, we

would simply not know how to feel” (Scheper-Hughes and Lock 1987: 28). One must wonder if, without emotions, we would ever be motivated to do anything, let alone protest against something or take part of any social movement (Jasper 1998).

Emotions inevitably motivate people to act in certain ways; the stronger the emotion, the more likely one is to act on it. Emotions are also often linked with people’s moral values, both of which largely make up identity (Jasper 1998: 401). Jasper argues that when negative emotions (like anger or jealousy) are present, they can become stored within, which in turn makes it that much more likely that something else will elicit more of the same negative emotion (Jasper 1998). I believe that this explains some of the protest culture in Brazil. Most people whom I interviewed spoke of their morals as opposed to the morals of the country’s decision makers, or lack thereof. The intensity with which they feel anger towards the government, elite corporate leaders, and some political leaders is deep, and the number of injustices triggering this anger is expanding. I heard time and time again from people of varying walks of life that they were proud to be Brazilian, that they loved their country and its traditions, but that they had kept quiet too long about the injustices and the exclusion that goes on there. Two middle class siblings in their early twenties explained to me that they grew up hearing from their parents that fighting for those who lack citizenship rights in Brazil was useless, and that there was no reason to spend energy even thinking about injustices present in their society. Even for such young and privileged individuals, keeping quiet and letting multiple issues fester at once have exacerbated frustration. While they had yet to be active in any protests, they told me that they no longer believed advocating for the less fortunate was useless; they strongly feel that change needs to occur in Brazil to better the country. Despite any stereotypes of protests and protesters, given the corporate greed, imprudent spending, and lack of public services (healthcare, education, and

sanitation) in Brazil, it could be argued that protesters acted logically; even if nothing tangible changes because of the protests, the protesters are human beings who need to have their opinions heard and their emotions expressed. From data I gathered and observations I made, there was urgency to this need. This is something that compelled me to focus my research on the protest movement. While, as humans, we are cultured with this need, it was not being met, and suddenly became a priority; I found that decades of silence, increasing oppression of varying degrees, and astronomical spending for the mega-events created an unprecedented, emotional need.

Where an individual's emotions can motivate them into action, collective emotion is one of the major bolsters of protest culture (Jasper 1998:416-420). People come together because of a shared ideal or cause and a greater, collective culture is created through beliefs, songs, aesthetics, and rituals. (Jasper 1998: 417). As Jasper explains, "The group nurtures anger toward outsiders, or outrage over government policies. Reciprocal and shared emotions, although distinct, reinforce each other – thereby building a movement's culture" (Jasper 1998: 417). This was the first time I fully understood this concept. The protest culture I saw unfold in front of me was intriguing for many reasons. I watched as people came together collectively and in support of one another. I listened as people intelligently discussed who was responsible for the lack of healthcare, education, and sanitation. I heard many voices speaking positively about advocating for others. I witnessed the "we" begin to encompass much of Rio, including not just the population, but public spaces. I observed people fighting for each other, across socio-economic lines, in a collective fight for citizenship rights. The formulation of a collective group where passions run deep is, in this case, of great cultural significance. Differences that usually keep people from identifying with one another – socio-economical, occupational, generational, etc. – became less important during this time, and support for the group and its causes became



paramount. My participants who protested are from varying backgrounds – from Sabrina, a homeless, unemployed 44 year old woman, to Vagner, a very successful 68 year old academic. People are claiming negative aspects of their world, and finding agency together to speak out against them. This creates opportunities to harvest positive emotions out of otherwise hurtful things, even if for only a time. Finding collective ideas through shared emotions can be empowering, and with the right elements can lead to action.

It is interesting to revisit these theories after my follow-up research, and considering the World Cup has now come and gone in Brazil. If one were to form beliefs about current protest culture in Brazil based on the conference I attended, it is alive and well; there are stark social injustices that must change, there is a “we” versus “them” mentality, and collective emotion is steadily powerful and will certainly lead to continuing protests. However, that is not necessarily reflected in what actually took place during the mega-event. While some protests occurred surrounding the games, they are nothing compared to the demonstrations of 2013. There were many small demonstrations during the World Cup, but each only had a few hundred protesters. Compared to the millions that took to the streets in June of 2013, this created very little attention. It appeared that no one was boycotting the games, the way it was argued they would. In hindsight, I might posit that Rational Actor Theory is perhaps more relevant here than I previously believed. Maybe the reality of boycotting the World Cup, soccer’s greatest event and something deeply rooted in Brazilian tradition, makes less sense to Brazilians than believing there is a likelihood of any political or social change. As I stated earlier, the belief that change is possible is crucial to protest movements (Johnston and Noakes 2005). Perhaps the majority of Brazilians stopped believing that there is a possibility of change or rupture in their corrupted

system. Or perhaps, more optimistically, we have yet to see a revolution that will eventually take place.

## **4 STRUCTURAL INEQUALITY IN BRAZIL**

### **4.1 Structural Inequality, Sanitation, and Wellbeing**

There is no question that Brazil is rich with glistening beaches, sun-kissed sand, and luminous landscapes. Centuries of Portuguese colonialism and slavery, however, created a legacy of structural inequality and violence. A large concentration of Rio de Janeiro's population lives in poverty and many lack access to having their basic human needs met. According to a 2010 consensus, just over 22% of Rio's citizens live in poor favela communities (Hurrell 2011). Within these neighborhoods there is not always access to clean water, and they are often lacking in basic sanitation systems. People living in these communities are both the descendants of African slaves and impoverished people of mixed and European descent who migrated from rural areas in search of opportunities for work that a more urban setting may provide (Roette 1972). Brazil boasts that it is a racial and social democracy, but in reality this is not the case. As authors Michael Woolcock and Estanislao Mario (2008) describe the reality in Brazil, "In principle, all Brazilians have equal rights; in practice, certain social groups lack these rights and are excluded from the services provided by the government" (Woolcock and Mario 2008: 7). The groups that they are describing include indigenous Brazilians, Black Brazilians, the rural poor, the landless, and those living in favela communities.

Historically, favelas are marginalized places where the poor have been forced to settle. The government and powerful corporate leaders have never cared to address favela residents concerning their needs or their problems. People living in favelas construct their own housing

and communities because they are neglected by the formal sector. As Perlman describes, “Throughout their history, favelas have been rejected by the ‘formal’ city and have continually been threatened with destruction. The moment people began building their own homes and communities outside the control of the state or the market, they were seen as a menace to the city of privilege” (Perlman 2010: 26). The physical space occupied by favela residents is small considering its population size, so people end up living in close proximity to each other, often literally on top of one another; many houses, though small, are several stories high. Vacancies elude favela communities, as they have no gaps (Perlman 2010: 37). Donizete is a 34 year man old who grew up in Rocinha, the largest and most famous favela in Zona Sul (South Zone). He guided me throughout the community in April, 2014, pointing out examples of the overcrowding and how it is executed. He explained that if a house has a good enough foundation, its rooftop is valuable. There is constant construction in this community. As Donizete describes, “Even a lot of times where they shouldn’t try to make the new buildings, or put more wires together. People are always adding and growing Rocinha.”



Figure 4 Rocinha 1



Figure 5 Rocinha 2





**Figure 6 Rocinha 3**

We traveled deeper into the favela together, and the streets narrowed and the turns sharpened. I followed him, and saw a bustling, thriving community of people enveloped amongst waste. As we made our way through the community, I walked through the streets and sidewalks artfully, trying to avoid stepping in filth. I constantly watched the ground so as not to trip – the random and opportunistic nature of the foundation here translates into uneven footing throughout. The streets were lined with garbage, some of the stacks reaching several feet high. The types of garbage spanned from plastic bottles to raw meat, with everything you can imagine in between. Though I was obviously an outsider, being with Donizete afforded me access into this community. I was invited into people's homes to look at and better understand its infrastructure.

A few children performed music for me while others danced the Samba. The contradictions displayed by Rocinha are difficult to describe. It is largely filthy and extremely crowded. It is also joyful and beautiful. Favelas are places portrayed by "...insecurity of tenure, poor structural housing conditions, deficient access to safe drinking water and sanitation, and severe overcrowding. All these factors have direct consequences for the physical and psychological well-being of the population" (Sclar et al. 2005: 901). Though many favela residents have strong ties to their communities, the cycle of poverty and structural violence keeps them from advancing their socioeconomic status and affects their options for social mobility.

When Brazil was given the bid to host the two biggest events in the world – the World Cup in 2014 and the Olympics in 2016 – things began changing quickly. While all major cities have some version of their own poor “slum” or “ghetto” communities, they are usually easy to hide, and not seen by tourists. In Rio, the opposite is true, as many favelas are on display on the mountainsides of the city. One notices the favelas while traveling through Rio, therefore Brazilian state officials cannot hide the intense inequalities of their country, which led to the pacification program (Holtzman 2014). The pacification program commenced in 2008 under the guise that it was put in place to make certain communities safer. Before pacification, these communities were informally policed by drug traffickers. While this fact is replete with negative connotations to some, it is imperative to explore all aspects involved. Favelas have historically been left out of any formal governmental services offered to the rest of the city, including policing. These communities had to create their own sense of law and order, and drug traffickers became just that. People living within this context knew what was acceptable and what wasn't, ranging from petty theft to rape and murder, and they knew the consequences if they did not behave accordingly: drug traffickers would provide the punishment they deemed appropriate.

They carried guns out in the open, which only confirmed their authority. While ethnocentrists might interpret this as an uncivilized system, locals acknowledge it as successful and systematic as any other. Donizete explained,

You might think it's scary, drug dealers and their guns everywhere. Most people think it's scary. But everyone knows the rules. Before the pacification, it was not perfect. But it worked. No place is perfect. Most people don't understand this, but it worked well. Better than now, with the UPP. Pacification has ruined my community, not the drug dealers.

Winning the bid for the world's largest events changed things for Brazil. The government decided that it was time to "pacify" certain favela communities by placing governmentally sanctioned police units in them to provide legitimate law and order. No longer would lawless drug traffickers possess authority over these neighborhoods, instead, gun bearing military police agents would. The government explained that this pacification was set in place as an attempt to make these favelas safer for their residents; though historically ignored, the government decided it was time to address crime within these communities. Along with safer communities, the government spoke of bettering schools, medical facilities, and public transportation. Of the several hundred favelas in Rio, approximately 174 now contain Pacifying Police Units (UPP)(Holtzman 2014). Theoretically, this could be argued a positive thing, but it is brimming with complications. To say that drug traffickers are in charge, to say that they essentially are the local government, implicates problems. Clearly, who would want criminals leading a community? While seemingly problematic, in practice, they are legitimately invested members of the community who have a stake in what happens there. The pacifying police do not. While crime has technically been reduced in the communities receiving pacification units since 2008, some argue they have had an inverse reaction. As Holzman explains, "There are widespread reports of police abuse, including favela residents as de facto criminals, endemic corruption,



excessively violent tactics, torture, and suppressing the lawful communication of protesters and journalists. Too often civilians are killed after being caught in the crossfire between UPP forces and drug traffickers (Holtzman 2014).” In addition to all this, these communities have not seen any improvements they were promised; talk of bettering schools, medical facilities, and transportation has fallen by the wayside (Holtzman 2014). My research indicates that the motivation behind the pacification program was not to better the lives of favela residents. If it was, it has not succeeded. The most common sentiment toward the police pacifying units is fear. Overall, people are displeased and distrustful of the program, and unhappy with its results thus far. Most of my informants voiced concern over the future of the communities that have been pacified.

## **4.2 Inequality in Healthcare**

Healthcare, both preventative and continuous, is an unequivocal human necessity, and many argue that it is an intrinsic human right. Unfortunately, a large percentage of people living in Rio do not have adequate access to healthcare. Many people with whom I spoke in Brazil voiced concerns about lack of access to proper healthcare. Two of my informants – who are upper-middle class and well employed – spoke to me at length about how problematic it is, even for them. They explained that even if you have a health care plan provided by your job, if you want ready access to good quality health services, you must pay out of pocket for a separate, private plan. The majority of the population in Brazil relies on the overwhelmed public facilities. As Alves and Timmins explain,

As is the case with most public healthcare systems around the world, the Brazilian system is characterized by long waiting times and questionable quality, with the practical implication that those who are forced to rely on the system spend more time being sick, and subsequently, have a diminished health stock (Alves and Timmins 2001: 5).

People who lack access to formal healthcare because of their socioeconomic status have to rely on the lacking public system or go without. Some individuals turn to black market pharmaceuticals, home remedies, religious healing, or other alternative medicines when they become ill (Samano et al. 2005). The lack of access to healthcare is intensified for people living in favela communities. A number of residents reported that there are a few clinics aimed at women's health in these areas, but none that provide preventative medicine. In addition, residents do not typically go to the doctor unless there is an emergency. Rarely is a treatable illness diagnosed early on. In some cases, this can lead to a minor illness becoming serious. People in these communities are not capable of taking control of their own health, as they are excluded from quality health services (Riley et al. 2007: 5). Regardless of socioeconomic status, every participant with whom I spoke about healthcare in Brazil quickly posed concern with both lacking access to it and the quality of the system in place.

### **4.3 Inequality in Education**

The Brazilian constitution states, "The new [Brazilian] Constitution does not set age limits: it determines that education is compulsory, aiming at providing the necessary structure to the development of the students potential as an element of self-fulfillment, training for work, and conscious exercise of citizenship." Unfortunately, this is not held up for all citizens. Several of my informants told me they did not have access to proper education. Others told me that they did get a good education, but that they know that many Brazilians do not. "Good education" is also a relative concept. Simply providing an education is not always enough; students need motivated teachers and a positive environment in which to learn. A few months following the initial protests that began in June of 2013, teachers in Rio went on a strike due to poor conditions and low salaries. Protests broke out on the national "teacher's day" in support of them (Davies 2013).

When people, or groups of people, are denied access to education, they are very unlikely to find opportunities for upward mobility. When an individual is born into a lower class, they are likely to be put to work at a younger age and not likely to find access to education. Donizete explained to me that most people living in Rocinha have very little access to or opportunity for education. In his words,

Most people who grow up in Rocinha leave school at least by age 12 or 14 to work. Some don't get that far. I believe maybe less than 5% of adults who are from here went to high school at all. You might have 1% that finished high school. That is it. It just doesn't happen here, education. If you have some money, 200 or 300 Reals per month, you can send your child to some school that is little bit better, and then they might learn more things. But what is likely is that they will not go to school after 12 or 13, they will get a job. See all these bottles of water here? We buy this case of 24 bottles here in Rocinha for about 8 Reals. We take them to the beach, and we sell each for 2 Reals. That is the real education that happens here.

Predictably this becomes an inevitable cycle; the poor stay poor while the rich stay rich (Roett 1972). As Mario and Woolcock state, "There is broad empirical evidence that education is a key correlate of income inequality in Brazil" (Mario and Woolcock 2008: 12). Inequality in educational opportunities translates into inequality in earning potential later in life (Lorel 2008). It is important to understand the intensity of structural inequality in Brazilian society. When something as fundamental as education is denied to some and not others, inequality is inevitable. Research by Bernd Reiter shows that

...elites use access to basic education to defend their inherited privilege. The analysis of community schools further demonstrates that inequality also blocks effective community and parental involvement in school management, as schools tend to distance themselves from neighborhoods portrayed as black, and thus 'dangerous' (Reiter 2009: 345).

There is no clear solution to this problem of inequality of education. What is explicitly clear, however, is that the inequality must be acknowledged, and the results of it appreciated. People involved in the protest movement that began in June 2013 had varying levels of education. I

spoke to several protesters who had graduate level degrees, and several protesters who had no formal education after the age of 12. Despite each individual's experience with education, the resounding idea was the same: people protested that education needed to receive better funding and care, and that all citizens needed equal access to it.

The protests began due to the increase in transit fare, but quickly, almost simultaneously, became about fundamental human and citizenship rights. Concerns about the lack of access to quality education and healthcare were specifically paramount throughout the demonstrations. While individuals I spoke to have their own ideas about why the current protest culture has appeared in Brazil, everyone mentioned either education or healthcare, and often both.

#### **4.4 Additional Motives behind the Current Protest Movement**

##### **4.4.1 Transportation**

Protests broke out all over Brazil in June of 2013 in reaction to what the government claimed was a slight increase in transportation fare – “*É apenas 20 centavos*” (it's just 20 cents). Public transportation in Brazil is among the most expensive in the world; one study shows that people in Sao Paolo and Rio de Janeiro have to work an average of ten minutes to make enough for one fare, which is extremely high in comparison to most major cities (Goodman 2013). Despite the high prices, the actual quality of the service is subpar. There are long waiting times, ultimately unreliable vehicles, and perpetual crowding (Goodman 2013). Because of these factors, informal transportation became a booming business in the 1990's (Coletto 2010). Many smaller and more reliable vehicles making up this informal economy led to more frequent, reliable, and better quality options for transport, and additionally added many jobs to communities that were suffering from under/unemployment (Golub et al. 2009). Residents grew to appreciate informal transportation; it was cheaper and more reliable than formal public transit,

and fully functional for years. In early 2013, a few months before I conducted my preliminary research, the government banned informal transportation. This was allegedly in response to the high-profile rape of an American tourist (Lavin 2013). Claiming it was for “regulation” and “safety” purposes, the country did away with the alternative to the quite expensive and unreliable public services. Many of the people who live in favela communities have to travel far to get to their low-paying jobs. Often more than one bus ride is needed. Francisca, 28, has to travel 43 kilometers (more than 26 miles) to get to her job as a museum attendant in downtown Rio. Because of the need to travel for work, in essence, the government is forcing those who cannot afford cars to use public transportation. Keeping all this in consideration, let us revisit the slight price increase I mentioned earlier. As I have discussed, the rates were already among the highest in the world. The quality of the services offered is low. The government abolished the alternative options for transportation that citizens had grown to rely on. They did not want the public to be alarmed; they wanted to reassure them to that it “...is just 20 *centavos*.”

Unfortunately for the government, Brazilians made sure that everyone knew it was not, in fact, just about cents. In multiple cities, throughout the country, people took to the streets to protest the increase in the cost of transportation. What I found so compelling – from where I was standing – was that with the birth of the protests, I witnessed people claiming their agency all around me. It was as if the protests woke people up from a deep sleep, well rested and ready to stand up for themselves. So much so, in fact, a social media slogan for what was occurring developed: *#ogiganteacorou* (The Giant Awoke). Dafne, a 21 year old student, told me that she had never witnessed anything like it. She knew a little bit about the history of protests in Brazil, but claimed she had never really thought about them; she likened them to stories school teachers begrudgingly tell:

They talk about them [protests in the 60s], sure. They are part of our history, but it is not like the protests even happened. They didn't [seem] real. Nobody is excited to talk about them. It is always just a boring history lesson. You know, part of school that nobody thinks interesting – students or the teachers.

The mobilization she observed beginning in June of 2013 has shifted her opinions and ideas about Brazilians, and she has been inspired to stand up against injustice. She explained that she has not been active in a protest yet, but believes that will change soon. She seemed genuinely excited at the prospect of protesting:

I have not gone, but I really hope there are big demonstrations soon. Last time I don't know why I didn't go – I think maybe I didn't realize just how big of a deal it was. Before, I didn't think that Brazilians cared about each other. I think that everyone here is selfish, and doesn't want to work hard to make a change. But I think different now. I see Brazilians fighting hard for what they think is right. I see that there can be a difference – there are reasons to fight, we can hope for change.

During the summer of 2013, everywhere I went, day or night, on the beach or in a taxi, people wanted to talk about issues that upset them, mostly the lack of public services (healthcare, education, sanitation), excessive spending by the city for mega-events, pacification, and government removals of citizens. They actively wanted to engage me with why these issues came about, who was in charge of making decisions, and changes they want to see. I gained as much information as I comfortably could with each participant, asking age, occupation, level of education (when it came up naturally), and neighborhood in which they live, as well as generally observing them. Across all lines – socioeconomic, racial, occupational, generational – people openly discussed how they, as Brazilian citizens, deserved more from their government.

#### **4.4.2 Imprudent Spending**

In 2013, Brazil had already spent billions of dollars in construction in anticipation of the upcoming mega-events (World Cup, 2014 and Olympics, 2016), and would certainly continue to spend more. Considering it is a country rife with poverty, spending like this is extremely

problematic, infuriating, and fueled the protests (Rueda 2013). My research indicates that most people living in Rio believe that much of the spending is unnecessary and useless. This occurs in every city that hosts mega-events, and is no surprise to anyone. That being said, it is particularly problematic in Brazil, where a large concentration of citizens does not have access to basic resources, e.g., shelter, food, and healthcare. Cariocas expressed to me that they believe much of the spending is questionable at best. An important example of this occurred shortly after Brazil's elite found out they got the bid for the 2014 World Cup. The state spent R\$30 million (roughly 13.5 million USD) to build a wall separating a major highway and the favela Complexo de Maré (Green 2012). Officials called this wall an "acoustic barrier" that would provide sound protection from the highway for the community. No one I spoke to believes this to be the true motivation. The overall sentiment is that these walls were built and this money spent as a meager attempt to hide the poor communities from future tourists. The government has never wanted to help the community with anything before gaining the bid for the mega-event; Maré, like other favelas, does not have proper sanitation, healthcare, or education. If the government really wanted to help the people in the community, they could have spent the R\$30 million on things that would have had an effective positive impact on it. Anna, a 37 year old woman who grew up in Maré, explains

I don't believe that they can believe that we believe them for that (laughter)! It is like because it is Brazil and this is how things are they don't even try to make up a good lie! We are poor, but we are not stupid. I have no school after 11 years, but I know what happened. They [didn't] build that wall to protect us from anything. They know it, we know it. All of Rio knows it. It is an insult that they make this up that it is for our benefit, but you know what? I am sad, but not surprised. If they really want to help, take away the UPP (military pacification units), give us the right to health and a clean community, and then leave us alone. That won't happen. We have walls. And you know what? The walls are not even nice. 30 million reais, and they don't even try [to] make them nice.

I flew in to Rio for the first time in 2013, and took a bus on the highway where the walls had been constructed. The irony is that it does very little to distract from the community. Even if I had not noticed the sight of it, I could sense the lack of sanitation by the odor in the air. When I discussed this with Chico, a 30 year old graduate student who has never stepped foot into a favela, his response was, “Jessica, you notice because you are you. You notice because you care. Rio doesn’t care. The rest of the world won’t care.” I hope the world can someday prove Chico wrong.

#### **4.4.3 “Removal Can Have a Happy Ending”**

Some of the favela communities in Zona Sul are nestled on mountainsides in Rio de Janeiro that overlook the beautiful city. Ironically, the poorest people in the city often have the most picturesque views of it. Railroads were introduced to Rio in the 1800s and brought greater access to the mountains. Poor, homeless people used this transport to move up the mountainside and create space for themselves (Alissa Westervelt 2012). This trend continued for years, and by the early 1900s, more and more rural migrants were coming to Rio in hope of finding work. Many of these newcomers made the mountainside their home. As these communities grew and evolved, so did the quality of the structures being built. As time went on, individuals had better access to a variety of materials, and were able to reinforce the better structured homes already there, and replace the ones of lesser quality. Though the residents are among the poorest in the country, they are highly resourceful. As technology advanced for those in the city with access to money, those living in favelas found ways to take advantage of technology. They invented ways to connect with electricity and the resources it afforded them. The building and resource-collecting continued, making the homes more durable, and life in the favela began to somewhat mimic life below the mountain; favelas have become legitimate, semi-legal communities



recognized by the rest of the city (Perlman 2010). Donizete made a point of pointing out various examples of sharing resources in Rocinha. They seem to pose a severe fire hazard to me, but they work. Today, most people living in the community have television and access to the internet. I stay connected to several people living here through Facebook.



Figure 7 Rocinha 4

People living in favelas live in poverty, and have historically been excluded from the formal sector. These communities vary in terms of development and services provided. Some have basic sanitation services and running water, but some do not; often, their citizens lack access to things they need. Poverty, in instances like this, is not simply about financial income. It also encompasses the lack of voice, power, and stability, and can breed fear in people (Mario and Woolcock 2008). Social exclusion in Brazil has created a cycle of obstacles for some people to access things that they need. As Mario and Woolcock explain, “Exclusion works through institutional-procedural processes that limit the opportunities of certain groups to exercise their rights to equal access to markets, services, and means of political participation and representation based on built-in features of the functioning of those institutions” (Mario and Woolcock 2008: 4).

Favelas were created by people who could not afford housing elsewhere in Rio. The government largely ignores the communities and the residents who reside in them. Until, that is, someone with greater financial means becomes interested in the land they are on. As stated earlier, many favelas offer the most beautiful views of an exquisite city. Once real estate developers recognize how valuable this can be, the city often becomes interested in the communities. In the 1960s, the land that rested beneath three large favelas, Catacumba, Praia do Pinto, and Esqueleto, was in Leblon, a neighborhood that had become very desirable due to its magnificent landscape. Realizing the power in that land prompted change. As Janice Perlman (2010) explains, “The city wanted the land, real estate spectators wanted the land, and no one wanted poor people living in their mist” (Perlman 2010: 75). The mayor began discussing plans for the removal of these communities in the 1960s, and was met with resistance by the people living there (Monteiro 2003). They did not want to leave their homes, their neighbors, or the

community that they built. In 1969, Praia do Pinto was the first of the three to be demolished. It was purposefully burnt down. As the community was ablaze, no fire trucks came; in fact, mass hysteria ensued (Perlman 2010). Though the resistance held off demolition of the other two communities for a while, people lived with constant fear over the threat of losing their homes. Those who inhabited Catacumba and Esqueleto fought to keep their communities, despite this fear. They lost the fight in 1970, when both communities were destroyed, and as Janice Perlman describes, “Immediately after the demolition...every trace of human existence there was razed, and the area was closed off with a high chain-link fence, on which a series of enormous billboards appeared advertising American products hawked by blonde, blue-eyed models” (Perlman 2010; 83). Today, the area is called Parque de Catacumba – a city park that is a popular tourist attraction. I have visited twice and hiked to the top both times. In April 2014, I watched children enjoy a zip-line ride through the park as their parents cheered them on. The views are, indeed, spectacular.



**Figure 8 Parque de Catacumba 1**





**Figure 9** Parque de Catacumba 2

Perhaps over-used and cliché, but in this case, true: history repeats itself. Perlman's encounter with removals in the 1960s bears a striking resemblance to some of my own research. Gaining the bid for the World Cup and the Olympic Games sparked motivation to remove many favela communities that either stood in the way of construction or simply stood on land that real estate investors recognized as valuable. Where communities are resisting, the mayor creates "negotiations". One is a program called "*Minha Casa Minha Vida*" (My House My Life), which offers public housing alternatives to people living in favelas. The advertisements I saw for this program and the banter used by people discussing it on television provide positive sentiments in regards to it. An outsider could easily believe that it is truly helping the poor. However, the

positive, helpful nature these sentiments provide is strikingly contradictory to those of the people I spoke to living in or recently removed from favelas. The resounding feeling of these participants is that the “negotiations” are manipulative and disingenuous. They believe the intentions are not to help poor people, but rather provide ways to remove and hide them from Rio’s view. My research indicates that they are correct.

The words “Removal can indeed have a happy ending” pierced the front page of a newspaper while I was in Rio in April 2014. It was an article describing all the ways in which people from favelas could benefit from being removed from their homes in exchange for public housing. This article was highlighted in many of the papers I saw presented at the conference. For a number of my informants, and certainly others, the article was incredibly insulting. There is nothing “happy” about removal for them. While many families have agreed to leave their communities, it is not by simple choice; the situations in this context are strikingly complicated. What I witnessed was forced removals of families. It is true that public housing offers new amenities and a seemingly clean environment. Unfortunately, these things cannot come close to replacing what people lose when they are removed from their community.

Vila Autódromo is the favela directly adjacent to what is being currently constructed as the Olympic Park. When Rio got the bid for the Olympics in 2009, Mayor Eduardo Paes officially stated that the removal of this community was imminent (Elliot 2013). Residents of this community have been fighting removal for years. The Mayor continues to go back and forth about their options, allegedly negotiating with them. As recently as last year, he agreed that the community could stay. As stated in The Rio Times,

Mayor Eduardo Paes agreed to the conservation of the favela community during a meeting with the residents association on Friday, August 9<sup>th</sup> [2013]. The Association of Residents, Fishermen, and Friends of Vila Autódromo (AMPAVA) stated afterwards,

“After years of resistance and struggle, Vila Autódromo achieved a commitment from the Mayor: Vila Autódromo and its residents will not be removed” (Elliot 2013).

I had the opportunity to visit this community in April of 2014. More than half of it had already been destroyed. The tactics of removal, in this case, include the demolition of a family’s house as soon as they agree to leave. Much of the debris resulting from this is left at the site. All formal street signs have been knocked down, and families that are resisting removal live amongst the rubble.



**Figure 10 Vila Autódromo 1**





**Figure 11 Vila Autódromo 2**



**Figure 12 Vila Autódromo 3**





**Figure 13 Vila Autódromo 4**



Figure 14 Vila Autódromo 5





**Figure 15 Vila Autódromo 6**



**Figure 16 Vila Autódromo 7**





Figure 17 Vila Autódromo 8



**Figure 18 Vila Autódromo 9**





**Figure 19 Vila Autódromo Twilight**



**Figure 20 Vila Autódromo Twilight 2**

It is important here to revisit Perlman's comments about removals that took place in the late 1960s. Just steps outside Vila Autódromo, there are busy highways and billboard advertisements welcoming the upcoming Olympic Park.





Figure 21 Signs of the future 1



**Figure 22 Rio's future?**

I spoke to Carlos, a community leader in a favela where many residents have been threatened with removal. He refuses to leave. His family was forcefully removed from the Catacumba area when he was 14 years old. He is not interested in the newly built, upscale apartment complex *Minha Casa Minha Vida* is offering. He will not be seduced by the swimming pool it provides, though many others have been – his daughter included. This is the first time since she was born that they have not lived together.





Figure 23 Carlos

As I was walking out of the community, I felt compelled to express my gratitude for having the opportunity to visit and witness the reality its members were facing. The woman whose ears this gesture fell upon, another American visitor who attended the conference replied, “Yeah, but it’s so sad.” As an anthropologist, I found this statement jarring. To easily qualify someone else’s reality is problematic, and to do so by saying this situation is “sad” is simplistic at best. Being an observer at Vila Autódromo was intense; I imagine that better words to describe the situation escaped her. These removals are devastating Rio. They are happening so that real estate investors can build high-rises worth billions of dollars, in spite of people’s lives, communities, and well-being.

## **5 RESEARCH: IT’S NOT JUST ABOUT CENTS**

As stated earlier, the protests that broke out just after I arrived in Brazil were at first an explicit reaction to the 20 cent increase in public transit fare. In one breath, however, they became about much more. People were compelled to go to the streets over inequalities in healthcare, education, sanitation, pacification, removals, and general citizenship rights. Governmental officials continued to repeat time and time again that the increase was just a few cents. However, the protest movement that I witnessed was not about cents.

### **5.1 “A single spark can start a prairie fire”**

Ideas and feelings about the protests that began in June 2013 are mixed. Many of my participants simultaneously praised and critiqued the mobilization, claiming they were happy it took place, but complained that it was disorganized. Edison, a 22 year old student explains,

I was very happy to see that, the demonstrations. All of the reasons were good reasons. I never went to a protest, my mother would kill me if I go to a protest, but I was so happy that people were protesting. But they stopped too soon. They were so angry and wanted to fight so strong. And then they just stopped. I was sorry to see that. I think, maybe, sure,

there will be more protests, but I don't think unless they get together and organize better that anything will come out of it.

Others believe that the protest movement was extremely significant, that its existence was a powerful result in and of itself, and that the movement is going strong. Vagner is a 68 year old professor who has lived in Rio his whole life. He takes great pride in being a Carioca, and in the fact that he took on a leadership role during the protest movement in the 1960s as a student, and again in 2013 as an educator. Vagner told me,

I believe that the coming mega-events represent moments of transformation. Mostly, they are good for the powerful. For money, they are good for the powerful. The city has been transforming with building for the events. But the mobilizations that started last June show the real hope transformation. As Mao Tse-Tung said, "A single spark can start a prairie fire". I believe in that. And the spark that lit Brazil last summer was extremely bright and strong, and I feel it, still today. In the case of Brazil, it is important to not just look at the spark, but to look at the prairie, also. Brazilian cities, over years, have prepared quietly for the fight of the people. The arrogance and brutality of those in power is what initiated the protests. They didn't see or understand what was happening. The blindness, self-sufficiency, and violence of the agencies in power want to believe that protesters are "rebels without a cause". They are clueless. The protests were neither clueless nor lacking in focus. Pay attention! Read the posters! We demonstrated, and will continue to demonstrate, for very real reasons.

Like many people, Vagner feels the protests occurred due to a number of reasons - the increasing of public transportation being merely a catalyst for an uprising. He describes,

After people became upset about the increase of the transit fare, they [the government] thought they could placate the public by simply lowering it. The incapacity of the elite to understand what was going on, to see the bigger picture, was outrageous. When they lowered it, it just mobilized the people more! They went to the streets with all things that were unjust. Leaders tried to focus on vandals, people who were harming the city. But they were ignoring the vandals in uniform. The military police, as well as others with power who commit harm and violence to the real city – the citizens of Rio. Citizenship, not financial power, should take priority. The government has formed new anti-protesting laws that are as extreme as laws during the dictatorship. The elites are more afraid of the people since the demonstrations began last June. The failure of policies has been brought to light for the whole world to see. You can count on two things for the World Cup: lots of rain and lots of Brazilians creating disorder.

It has been both intense and poetic to write this thesis during the World Cup. Overall, there may not be many people boycotting the games or protesting in the streets, but Vagner is doing both. When I asked him if he was protesting during the World Cup, he answered, “I wouldn’t consider myself a citizen of Brazil if I did not.” I appreciated this sentiment very much, but understand why it was not the norm. To boycott the world’s largest soccer match is counterintuitive to being Brazilian. Soccer is enculturated in these people as much, if not more, than religion. I was a discussant at a symposium about how the World Cup was affecting Brazil a few weeks into the games. Every single person there expressed that they were officially boycotting the games. Unofficially, they all watched a game together during the lunch break. Honestly, I was disappointed that the disorder Vagner anticipated did not come to fruition. I am glad, however, that he continues to fight.

## **5.2 Who will make the parties?**

Many people I spoke to in Rio emphasized eviction as a leading problem associated with the mega-events. Many residents in favela communities have already been forcefully removed from their homes, while others are still fighting for their rights to stay where they believe they belong. I was humbled by the opportunity to meet with a respected community leader in a favela threatened with removal, Carlos. Carlos is middle aged, unemployed, and has dedicated his life to this community. In Carlos’ words:

The practice of displacing people is not new, it has happened since the 1960s. This displacement all happened because of the land value. But they never say that, they always make up arguments. I used to live in the area [porto de fuegas]. At that time, when I had 14 years, they said that the community polluted the lake and that they were killing the fish but at that time they already knew that it wasn’t true because it was a lake that had a canal that brings water from the ocean and that’s why the fish can’t live there.

Currently, Carlos is being harassed by city workers daily to leave the community he calls home.

This is not his first encounter with this experience. He describes,



[Displacement] has happened since that time, and then it was worse, that time they used the trucks that collect garbage to move people's homes. This time, [in my community], they bring private cars and nice trucks to take them out. It's never good for that to happen to a community, and that one community was divided into three or four places very far away from [one another]. I lost all my friends. All of my identity was with the place. That is always very terrible for the kids, the elderly. I was moved to this place, City of God, that has this movie and from there I was evicted again. There was a road that had to pass, so they pushed people out, and I came here. And thought that I wouldn't ever have to live that situation [eviction] again. But 40 years after I am living this situation with the government passing the evictions and being told to leave my home. In the 60's it was a time of dictatorship, now I am living the same things under a government that is supposed to be democratic. Under the dictatorship the government just did what they wanted, under [democracy] they do what they want by other ways so it sounds democratic. They always use many arguments to evict, like, "The road, the fish, the pollution", but really it is just in interest of the real estate market.

Carlos explained that he has heard every possible rationale of the state for why he, along with everyone else, should leave his home. When excuses do not work, the city knows it can rely on the desperation of the poor. He explains,

At this moment, they don't have any argument to remove the whole community and there is no legal process that says that these people have to leave. What they rely on is the needs of the people, so they come here showing pictures of the apartment with the swimming pool and they offer the families that are leaving R\$5,000 to go to buying new furniture. Many of these families never had the money to make their houses nice, and didn't have money to buy a big TV. With this money they can buy a big TV. They are just convincing families who have needs that they would be better if they would just leave.

Carlos is steadfast in staying in his community and maintaining his position as a leader there. He believes that the real motivation to get rid of the community is the value of its real estate, and he insists that he will not let removal define his life again.

But there are families who are resisting, and who want to stay. The last meeting they had here, they had about 115 people that are still with the community association, all with families who are not wanting to leave. This is a very unequal struggle against city hall and they come here offering this money, offering all these things. People need money to live, and it is very hard to argue against all this pressure, people coming here everyday offering things. The reason they are wanting to take these people out of here, it is not because of the Olympic Games, or any of these arguments that they said before. It is because this region is becoming of much interest, and 75% of the area of the Olympic

Park, after the games, is going to become high-rise for high income people. It's obvious that they don't need to take Vila Autódromo out of here because of the Olympic Games, it's because of this 75% of land becoming incorporated. The 3 main construction companies in Brazil own this land, and they are investing so much money. Because they are investing so much money, of course they went to the mayor to help them negotiate how to get rid of our community to make this place more pretty. The existence of our community turns the land less valuable. But we were here before all of this. [I want to stay] because you build your roots in a place, you create your identity, you have your neighbors.

He reminded me of his prior experience with forced removal. Even though it was more than forty years ago, the pain it inflicted clearly remains, which seemingly plays into his intense dedication to his community:

I've been through this before. I lost everything when I was removed from my home at 14. When you move to a place, sure, maybe it is a good place, but you lose part of your life, part of your relationships. Here I know all my neighbors, I see all these children that are always playing around here. I live for these children, they bring joy to me. And my identity is here. It is a tradition that I make parties for all the children on their birthdays and for Christmas, you have all these families come together here. If I leave, who will make the parties? I can't even think about that.

Carlos' unyielding commitment to the community has been met with consequences. As he describes,

I have a daughter, and she always lived with me. She always loved the parties, too. Now she is a teenager. Most of her friends went to live in the new apartment. Her mother also went to live there. Never before had she asked to live with her mother. But she wrote a note telling me she now wants to live with her mother so that she can be close to her friends. Now we are very divided, she says she loves me a lot, but she really misses her friends.

Carlos explains that Rio is run by corporate leaders and real-estate investors whose only intentions are to fill their own pockets. While he understands this to be the reality, he will not let that be a reason to give up his fight. In his words,

The city can be made always only so that the rich get richer and the poor don't have a place to live. [With the] Olympic Games and development, and city growth, investment in the city, it is made like that. Many people ask to talk to me about why I stay. I turn

down almost every interview because every time I talk to some people, no matter who they are or where they say they are from, no matter what I say, I am accused of doing damage to the environment. I get told that I do not belong here, me, the person who built the community. I will stay. I will keep fighting. Right now there are about 15-20 families wanting to stay here and fight to keep their community. We are strong.

He was traumatized by forced removal as a child, and clearly carries that trauma with him today. He is fighting an uphill battle against the city to save a community that is in the process of being destroyed. He has chosen this fight over his family. One could argue that he should give up; it is likely he will not win. Watching him tell his story, however, I can see that this fight is not only about the community. It is about his right as a human being to not be oppressed and abused by the city of which he is a citizen.

### **5.3 Rio should change its name to “Construction Company” – these are the people who rule the city**

As discussed in chapter 3, an astronomical amount of money has been spent in Rio due to the mega-events, and much of the spending is questionable at best. I used the example of the \$R30 million spent on building an “acoustic barrier” between the highway and the favela Complexo do Maré, which many people believe to be the city’s attempt at hiding the community from tourists. I heard from people that they believe large corporations and real estate moguls are in control of the city. They are responsible for all the spending, and it is often at the cost of the poor. Maria, a 43 year old university professor told me,

The poor have been erased, silenced, and invisibilized in so many parts of Rio due to neoliberal party’s reactions to mega events. The time now in Rio is like neoliberalism on steroids. To quote Mike Davis, we’ve gone “from social welfare to social warfare.” There has become a type of accumulation by dispossession. What was benign neglect of the poor has become malign neglect of the poor. There is distrust of democracy and equality in Brazil. Neoliberal ideology is decidedly undemocratic. They let the rich rule, and property is valued over people. There has been an authoritarian takeover of the city – this is something that mega events create the opportunity for. Neoliberal hegemony, plus racialized inequality, leads to legalizing, organizing, and legitimizing inequality. *Minha Casa Minha Vida* benefits the real estate industry, not the poor. It is systematic

gentrification on real estate investor's terms. It is the symbolic extermination and erasure of Rio's urban poor, who are only tolerated if they are quiet, "civilized", and out of sight. The oversized elevator that hides Cantegalo from Ipanema, and the "acoustic barriers" that distracts Maré from people driving from the airport – these are two great examples of the millions of reais spent to try to camouflage poor communities.

Maria is an accomplished academic who receives grant money to do her research. The same day I spoke to her, I also spoke to Marcos. Marcos is 59, lives in the favela Complexo do Maré, and he works informally doing odd jobs. He quit school at the age of ten. He explains,

The rights in Brazil are selective for people who live in favelas. Poor people are suffering here, and we are seeing the most brutal confrontations to humans by other humans. It is terrible. Rio should change its name to "construction company" – these are the people who rule the city. I think [*Minha Casa Minha Vida*] is shit. If you knock down my house and give me a new one, it is not my house! They give a lack of infrastructure that makes people act in ways that look uncivilized, and blame the people for being in that position because they are criminals. The mega events are introduced, are treated as a solution to development. The kind of money that the city spends -that deserves the strongest protest. I support the black blocs [protestors who hide their identity and are associated with anarchy or violent acts]. I hope the system will become frightened by them. Do I like violence? Of course not. But at least they break banks and not favelas.

All of my research points to the fact that real estate companies and corporate leaders are in charge of the decision making in Rio. It is abundantly clear that their interests are not aligned with the interests of the city's denizens. These facts were reflected throughout my field notes, spanning all participants; they were not something believed by only the impoverished or working class. This is an unfortunate symptom of winning the bid for a mega-event. As Charles Rutheiser explains, "Planning and urban design...reflect the private, rather than public, interests" (Rutheiser 1996: 288).

#### **5.4 It's oppression, not pacification**

Favela life was far from perfect when drug traffickers had control. It could be argued that pacification might be a step up from criminals ruling the communities, especially to someone who does not have a working knowledge of the realities within them. Describing what life was

like with traffickers can paint a bleak and frightening picture. That being said, this situation is intensely complicated. When I asked Donizete to explain the pacification in Rocinha and what he thought of the UPP, he told me,

No, the pacification is terrible. Yes, there was violence before, but it is much worse now. I grew up here, and I don't ever remember feeling this fear before pacification. It is so much worse, people just don't know. Before this, the drug traffickers took care of things. People were scared and knew that they couldn't do wrong things. You steal from someone, they hurt you bad, and you rape someone, forget it. You will be lucky to be alive. But that was it. Most people didn't do crime. Even without crime, they were in charge. Imagine, two neighbors have argument over something big, what will they do, get [a] lawyer? No, we don't have things like that in our community. Instead we had traffickers. The men go to the traffickers, and they make their cases, and then the traffickers decide. It was not a court room, but it was something. And people do what the traffickers say. We don't have that anymore. Before, the community took care of itself. Now, you have the drug traffickers still, but they are not able to act as police or protect the people. They don't have that power anymore, so all they do is sell drugs and fight with police creating worse violence.

While it is an international drug trade, traditionally, most drug consumers are middle and upper-class Brazilians (Goldstein 2003). Though flawed, his experience of policing this way worked, and is not unique. Having drug traffickers in charge exacerbated the criminalization of the favelas by the middle and upper-class, but made sense inside of them. Goldstein explains, "...drug chiefs are important local figures; they are ...homegrown and locally based, and, as is well known, they provide badly needed services – for example, housing and cash in times of emergency...it is easy to explain why the gangs have a more sympathetic profile than police (Goldstein 2003: 181)." Donizete goes on to describe:

And the UPP, who are supposed to be the police, but they don't know the community. They don't know when someone is somewhere they're not supposed to be. Before, when you were in someone's house and you didn't belong there, the traffickers knew it. They knew when something was wrong. That is missing here now. So crimes are much easier now. And plus, they [the UPP] don't care about the community anyway.

Agostinho, a 22 year old university student, explained,

I didn't go to a protest yet, but I will. Mostly because of the pacification. Health care is really big problem, too, I understand. But the government, with their UPP, selling to the world that they do pacification for the communities - that makes me really upset. And it's not pacification – it's oppression. I am young, but I understand the way things work here. I mean, believe me, I love my country. But things are very messed up here. The government doesn't do things for the people, especially the poor people. They do things for rich people and real estate companies. That's it. I don't live in a favela, but I go a lot to see friends in Rocinha. The military police scare the people, they don't help the people. They are not there to “pacify” the community.

Maria, the university professor, has done extensive research regarding pacifications throughout Rio. Speaking critically, from a position of privilege, she explains,

In April of 2013, the word “favela” disappeared from google maps. This is a symbolic erasure of these communities. The poor here are criminalized; they are assumed to be uncivilized. In some favelas, the UPP has started banning *baile funk*, which is commonly associated with poor black favela residents. This is a veiled attack on Afro-Brazilian culture. This would be like the US putting a ban on twerking. Can you imagine that? In August of 2011, Morro da Providência's UPP organized a debutante ball, and provided “proper” attire for young men and women in the community. They played popular top-twenty music rarely heard otherwise in the favela. It was like the UPP had a community of dolls to dress up and play with. For some, it may have been fun, but to me it symbolically crushed tradition. The girls looked nothing like themselves.

Concerns about pacification and the UPP are not restricted to the poor and academic activists.

Most people I spoke to, across socio-economic lines and age groups, showed wariness of the situation. I spoke with Dafne, a 20 year old upper-class university student who has never been inside a favela. When I asked her about the pacification, she immediately tensed up. Though far removed from it, simply being asked about it yielded a visceral reaction. She explained,

I don't trust [the UPP]. No one trusts them. They remind my parents about the dictatorship. I can't believe those people have to live like that, with [the UPP] always there. The government doesn't tell the truth about why they want pacification. It is a joke that they want to help the communities. All of a sudden, now, they want to help these communities? They never helped before. Nobody is believing them. The government doesn't care about poor people. They care about tourists and the money. They try to keep these communities quiet, and hide those people from everybody else.

My fieldwork included spending time in a few different pacified communities, in addition to speaking with participants. I understand why the pacification units remind Dafne's parents of the dictatorship. Their military presence is intimidating in an aggressive and threatening way. The units I encountered were set up in a fashion that segregates the officers from the community they are there to protect. The fact that they are not members of the community is problematic; they are not invested in what goes on there. The government claims that the purpose of pacification is to make these communities safer. My research indicates otherwise: pacification is an expression of oppression by the government.

### **5.5 We work hard to build the city: we are Rio de Janeiro**

During my time in Rio in April and May 2014, I had the opportunity to sit down with Sabrina, a 44 year old woman who knows removal all too well, and whose family (she and her three children) has most recently been removed from the Mangueira favela. They currently have no home. They sleep on the streets of downtown Rio, where she works informally, selling whatever goods she can get her hands on. She often travels far to find things to sell in the street or on the beach, I found her story both haunting and compelling. In Sabrina's words,

I work informally, selling things, trying to make a living in this crazy city with mega-events. Every time there is a mega-event, the state tries to take me out of my house. Yesterday they had a game with a lot of slums and they were doing their own games. If you live in the slum in Rio de Janeiro, you are eventually going to be removed. If you live in the streets, you are garbage, and you are left with no options. The reality of the city: working here formally is very difficult. Also [they say] you can't work informally because you pay no taxes, but that's not true, because I pay taxes. I travel a lot, I go to São Paulo often, I travel at night. I arrive there at 1 AM, make my purchases, and then come back. I work 24 hours a day. And I am always afraid, because I am not legal. I am always afraid of the police.

Despite her seemingly downtrodden situation and fear, Sabrina ensured me that she loves her city. She strongly identifies herself as a Carioca, and would have it no other way. Through this identity, she finds inspiration to fight for justice:

I realized that I had to do something else, something more. So I helped organize a demonstration, for the 1<sup>st</sup> of July in 2003. We had more than 3 thousand informal workers. That day, I took the microphone and saw the thousands of people. I was wearing the Brazilian flag. I was very ashamed of this, I did not want to wear the flag of Brazil, but at that moment, I thought it was nice. And I started to fight on other fronts. I lived in a place far away from downtown, from where I worked. But then I met other people, and started to form other demonstrations. With a lot of other people, we needed to be able to live near where we work. It was our right. But we were always running from the police. In addition to work, I started to include in my routine to explain to people why I was fighting for my rights. Knowing about my rights, I learned how to fight for them. Many informal workers were arrested. Many days they didn't go to work, they went to the streets to demonstrate, looking ahead.

It was at this moment, after Sabrina reminisced about these demonstrations and moved on to the summer of 2013, she truly came to life; her eyes grew wide, she began to gesticulate enthusiastically, and her words became loud and distinct.

And then, 2013, there was this great moment with a lot of demonstrations. I never thought this would have ever happened. I never thought I would have seen that many people on the streets. I remember when I organized my first demonstration, I never would have imagined that thousands or millions of people could be there. Then one day I got a call, saying that something was happening in downtown. I went there, and there were 5 thousand people, and then 15 thousand people, and then they were able to make a [demonstration]. And it was really good, because it was people I had never seen in the demonstration before, they were actually learning about what she had been fighting for. Many people didn't even know what they were doing there, or what they were fighting for, but they were there, at least. Because if they're there you can talk to them, you can try to convince them that they need to be on the streets, fighting. What I take from them, these demonstrations, that people are not happy with the way the mega-events are being placed here in Rio, what is happening because of them. They know the stadium is not enough.

When the subject turns to removal, all of the fervor and life disappears from Sabrina. Having been a victim of forced removal multiple times has been traumatizing. It disgusts her that the city tries to imply their intentions are to help people. As she describes,



They know that removing people from their houses is not right. *Minha Casa Minha Vida* [My House My Life] is a social program that gives people a new place to live, but it is so far away from people's homes, so far from where they work. The apartments might be nice, but the value of living close to work is more important, it's nicer. You cannot live in the city of Rio de Janeiro. You can live far away, and travel for hours to come to downtown to wash the intimate clothes of the rich ladies, but you cannot live in the city. Doormen and housekeepers, they are important to the city, and they shouldn't be left behind by the process of mega-events. This is a wonderful city for those who have money. Those who do not have money do not live a wonderful life. I always remember the removal. Police arrived in the morning, and when they arrived, I saw a lot of friends trying to barricade, trying to not let the police to destroy the houses, and I saw my stuff on the street. We were resisting. They brought a lot of trucks to take people to a shelter. There was a moment when a girl came from school, and the [police] were inside of her house, putting everything that she owned into a bag, and leaving her house. She saw everything. She went to school, and when she came back, all of her stuff had been put in bags, and she had no say in it. She tried to contact the authorities responsible for that, but the families ended up in the streets, regardless. Nothing was going to change the way people are treated in the slum.

When asked specifically about the mega-events, Sabrina shared with me,

Every time we complain about the way we are treated, the city says, "OK, but you have to understand that we have to do this in order to make a big event". OK, well, why don't you do this with the rich people, why is it always us? I just want to remember that this is the World Cup time, and we are still organizing demonstrations. I would really love to say that there is not going to be a World Cup, but we know there is going to be a World Cup, we have to put this out of our system. We have to say there is not going to be a World Cup, because we don't want it. I want this World Cup to go fuck off. I want rights, for me and everybody who lives in this city, who helps the city grow, who wakes up early in the morning, who takes the transportation. Who is, every day, at 5:30 AM in the city, working. These people are disrespected. We are given no rights. They think we are illegal. I think these people should be respected. We work very hard to build the city. We are Rio de Janeiro.

As stated earlier, theoretically, Brazil is a democracy and all its citizens have equal rights. In practice, however, this is not the case. In addition to people lacking equal access to public services, many have experienced - or will experience - being removed from their homes. In these scenarios, it is not simply people losing their houses, as Carlos and Marcos explained. It is the desecration of communities, and as a byproduct, the desecration of identity for many people living within them. My research indicates that, often times, people who work the hardest have

the fewest benefits in this city. The bitter irony here is echoed through Sabrina's words: these people are Rio de Janeiro. Without them, the city would not function. Despite this, the city is being built against them.

## 6 DISCUSSION

Global and structural inequalities set the stage for mega-event spending and policies to generate outrage and resentment that triggered the recent protest movement in Brazil. Everyone I spoke to over the last year has been bursting with passionate ideas regarding the current state of Rio. As humans, we are enculturated with emotions - emotionality is a natural phenomenon. How emotions are expressed and understood are part of our *habitus*; they make up a large part of who we are, and inspire us to act in the way we do. Everyone that I spoke to in Rio has emotionally charged thoughts about social and political policies that need changing. When emotions are felt collectively in this way, they can become reinforced and intensified. I witnessed the unleashing of collective emotion in Rio in 2013, something I understood until that time theoretically; it was then that I came to realize how meaningful it is in practice.

The timing of writing this thesis is complicated and difficult. The conference I attended in April was brimming with activists who were emotionally charged and ready for Brazil to rise up and speak out against the World Cup as a mega-event that is responsible for outrageous destruction, both physically and emotionally. I left the conference believing that the games would be largely boycotted by Brazilians and Brazilian enthusiasts alike. This was not the case. While the protests continued, and the movement still looms today, many Brazilianists have been surprised by events surrounding the 2014 World Cup. Considering the powerful ideas and emotions behind the protests, I – along with others - thought that more people would boycott the

games outright. There have been a number of protests all over Brazil for multiple reasons: the gross spending, police brutality, removals, and general corruption. Overarching themes at these protests are “FIFA go home” and “World Cup of Corruption” (Watts 2014). I am reminded of these protests daily. I have many friends who either live in Brazil or do research similar to my own. Each time I log into Facebook, I see evidence of the protests; if one were to assess what is happening in Brazil based on my newsfeed, it would appear that the protest movement is alive and thriving. However, in reality, the World Cup has been vaguely affected. A few weeks before the games began, I interviewed Erika, a 26 year old Brazilian student who was visiting Atlanta. When asked what she thought was going to happen, she explained,

I don't know, of course. Time will only tell. But I have the feeling that it will be typical Brazil. Everyone will be having their parties, and dancing, and drinking, and having a good time. I care about all these things, too [reasons for protests], and I did protest last summer. But with futebol, things, they are different. I can't explain, here. Here you don't have something like it. Some of you have religion. We have that, too, in Brazil, but futebol and Carnival – that is what really makes rules.

Erika clearly knew what she was talking about. Personally, I believed – and hoped – that more people would protest and that the protests would have a greater impact than they are having. Karl Marx' famous quote about religion, claiming that “...it is opiate for the people (Marx 1844)”, might be appropriate here. Marx was referring to how religion was used as an arm of the state to keep people oppressed and content in their oppression (Marx 1844). Many people I have spoken to believe that soccer has become the opiate of the masses in Brazil.

It is also important to acknowledge the cultural gravity of the world-class soccer event. Brazil is known for its serious love of the sport. Brazilians are often identified as soccer fans; not watching the games is counterintuitive. Soccer, especially the World Cup, is a fundamental human form of expression, production, and consumption in Brazil. Soccer is a secular ritual, ceremony, and celebration for Brazilians. Despite the intense problems created by the mega-

event, it ultimately had the support of the people. To understand Brazil, one must accept contradictions like this. The landscape alone, rich with crystal clear beaches, majestic mountains, and the transcendent views from them makes Rio a richly desirable destination. Because of these offerings, people will always want to travel there. The social injustices in place go unnoticed by many, and the leaders are not forced to give explanations for their actions. When talking to Cariocas, the love for their city is unquestionable and absolute, despite their passionate feelings about its flaws. The contradictions presented here are striking.

It must be noted that the protest movement has met some small successes. Several unions in Brazil protested right before the World Cup, using it as leverage to make demands for higher salaries and better working conditions. About a month before the games were scheduled to begin, federal police went on a 24 hour strike, and protested against what they felt was inflated spending on improper things. They demanded higher wages and threatened to strike again during the games (Speri 2014). In early June, just before the games were about to begin, transportation workers in São Paulo went on strike, and demanded higher wages and the re-hiring of those recently fired, knowing the city could not function without public transportation (Lehman 2014). In Rio, SEPE (the Education Professionals' Union) went on strike mid-May, weeks before kick-off, and several hundred teachers protested in the streets of downtown. In October of 2013, a few months after the initial protests broke out, thousands of educators took to the streets protesting many things - the lack of funding for schools, low salaries, and poor quality buildings, to name a few (Watts 2013). They went on a strike that lasted for seventy days, until enough of their demands were met. The protest in May of 2014 began partially in response to the fact that some of the promises from 2013 still had not been fulfilled (Parkin 2014).

A more explicit example of success that came out of a protest was in the case of Amarildo. Amarildo de Souza was a father to six children and a revered member of the community in Rocinha. He was given the nickname “Bull” due to his strength and good work ethic, and was considered a hero for saving a 4 year old from a fire at the age of 11 (Bowater 2013). In mid-July 2013, “Operation Armed Peace” was launched; 300 police officers were set upon Rocinha attempting to crack-down on drug trafficking (Bowater 2013). Though not a drug trafficker, Amarildo was detained by the police that day. He was never seen again. The police claim that they let him go shortly after they took him in, but no one saw evidence of him anywhere. On July 16<sup>th</sup>, Amarildo’s family declared him officially missing, and word of this situation spread like wild fire (Bowater 2013). A huge media campaign was launched, and it went viral. All over the world, through social media, people were begging the question: Where is Amarildo?



**Figure 24 Amarildo 1: included with permission by photographer**



Figure 25 Amarildo 2: included with permission by photographer



**Figure 26 Amarildo 3: included with permission by photographer**

Just a week after I left Rio, the Pope visited the city. Swarms of people traveled there to see him.



**Figure 27 Amarildo 4: included with permission by photographer**

I consider the fact that people all over the world were participating in asking this question publically to be an accomplishment.

The massive protest that launched this campaign also shed light on police activity. As Bowater describes,

...hundreds of Amarildo's friends and relatives demanded answers from the police, closing down a major road linking Rio's South Zone with the neighborhood of Barra da Tijuca for more than two hours. The people believe that Amarildo will not be found alive. Paulo Lins, the author who wrote *City of God*, on which the famous Brazilian film about drug crime and gang culture was based, and who also grew up in a favela, said: 'The police are always like this. It's one of the forces that kills most in the world, according to statistics, including those from the UN. This man who disappeared in Rocinha is only one among many' (Bowater 2013: 2)

What Lins alludes to here is that, while extremely sad, this is not a new development in the favela communities. This disappearance is not an isolated event. There was a formal investigation to find out where Amarildo was, likely a direct effect of local protest and international pressure. He was, in fact, tortured and killed by members of the UPP (Watts 2013). None of my participants trust the UPP, not even the ones who never have to come into contact with them, and some even had visceral reactions to discussing them. Through his disappearance,



Amarildo's legacy is one of fear and distrust of the UPP. The protests in this case were successful, in that they brought about an investigation and more awareness of the problems associated with the UPP and pacification.

## **CONCLUSION**

The protests in Brazil were a culmination of dissatisfaction with inequality and injustice, coupled with the blatant excesses and mismanagement of planning for the mega-events. At first, so it seemed, people were protesting an increase in public transportation fare. It became obvious very quickly, almost simultaneously, that it was not simply the transit fare that people were angry about. The government tried to quiet the protests; they thought they could placate the masses if they announced a retraction of the increase. This only added fuel to the protesters who proved what was happening was not about cents.

Healthcare and education were the two most common subjects people discussed and protested against. They are both imperative and integral to a successful life. Everyone I spoke to, regardless of socioeconomic status or their personal level of education, brought up the fact that a large portion of Brazil's population lacks access to healthcare. Even those who have access to healthcare told me that the system is corrupt and unacceptable, and they feel the need to purchase private insurance if they really want proper care. Education is necessary for success; through formal learning and support of qualified teachers, children become equipped with what they need to thrive. Unfortunately, there is not equal access to education throughout Brazil. Many people who grow up in favelas leave school at a very young age, often so they can work. Even for those who are able to receive an education, the public schools, like healthcare, are often not good enough. There have been multiple teacher strikes due to low wages and poor working conditions.

While everyone had their own motivation to protest, healthcare and education were major catalysts of the protest movement that emerged in June, 2013.

Transportation was the original motivation of the protests, but I immediately heard discussion of imprudent spending for upcoming mega-events. Whether for a stadium that will be rendered useless preceding the World Cup, or a meager attempt to distract tourists from favela communities, the country has poured billions of dollars into “building the city” for future tourists. The money spent could have done a lot to better the lives of Brazilian citizens, as many local residents lack access to having their basic needs met. Many argue that a more productive use of this money would have been to legitimately build the city; improving the living conditions of favelas and providing everyone with proper sanitation, healthcare, education, and general citizenship rights - that would build a stronger Rio. The tremendous spending angered many Brazilians, across socioeconomic lines. The people I spoke to and witnessed protesting span a cross section of Cariocas and many of them were equally alarmed by this spending, regardless of their address or education level. I heard and saw from the protesters that Rio is not taking care of Rio; the city is being run by real estate investors, banks, and corporate leaders, something people found worthy of protesting.

One of the harshest realities in Rio is people losing their homes. What we call eviction, in Brazil, they call removal. In a sense, the two words mean the same thing and could be used interchangeably. However, I choose ‘removal’ because I believe the implications of the word itself are important here - before my visit to Rio in April 2014, I never really deconstructed what it meant. Removal was the subject of many conversations I had in Rio at this time. More often than not it was not about simply losing a *house*. Of course people do not want to lose their homes, but the sentiments coming from locals who had been removed in the past, facing it

currently, or will in the future – in some cases all three – were about community. The Cariocas I spoke to strongly identified themselves through their communities, communities that cannot be replaced. People told me that through removal, they lose a large part of who they are. Carlos went so far as to say, “All of my identity was with the place.” It could be argued that identity is largely what the protest movement has been about. Brazilians identify themselves as just that: Brazilian. Given the history of structural inequality and violence in Brazil, perhaps the people who flooded the streets country-wide in the summer of 2013 were hoping to change the definition, and therefore identity, of being Brazilian.

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